KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG

Entrepreneurial Journalism in Africa

Opportunities, challenges and risks for media in the digital age

Edited by Francis Mdlongwa

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Learnings from a conference held by KAS Media Africa in Accra, Ghana, 16-19 September 2018

Edited by Francis Mdlongwa

Published by Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Media Programme Sub-Sahara Africa
Johannesburg
Republic of South Africa

Layout and design by J Adamson Design

ISBN Number 978-0-9870243-5-0

Images by So Fraiche Media, Ghana

Printed by United Litho, Johannesburg, South Africa

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Director KAS Media Africa

Media in Africa is under stress. Just like anywhere else in the world, fewer people are reading and consumer habits are changing fast, with more and more people trying to get news for free. But there is no good news for free.

Political and economic pressures have, even in countries such as Kenya or Nigeria, turned brave publishers, who stand by their journalists and publications, into a rare species.

More and more companies, organisations and politicians are trying to buy favourable reporting with notorious “brown envelopes”. And so the temptation for journalists to accept the “lunch money” or “transport compensation” or “per diem” is rising. In many cases, it is the publishers and editors-in-chief who don’t pay their writers a decent salary, thus making them vulnerable to this kind of bribery.

More and more media houses are running into increasing financial difficulties, and so we see deteriorating journalistic standards in many publications.

Big China has come onto the scene, big George Soros is already there, but it is doubtful that any of these philanthropists and business partners will save the media in the mid- to long-term. They are the paramedics – we need to be the doctors.

However, there seems to be an understanding that the media is important and that society needs the media. In October 2018, KAS Media Africa, therefore, gathered the CEOs of media houses, publishers and editors-in-chief from 16 different countries, both from Anglophone and French-speaking Africa, in Accra.

In the Ghanaian capital, they heard about different models of how to make one’s media enterprise economically stronger. Questions such as whether Africa needs or accepts a paywall featured. Along with several other key sustainability issues, the critical question of how the media can make itself more independent from government advertising – often a vital cog in the media’s sustainability in most parts of Africa – was also debated.

There is no one-size-fits-all model of a good media enterprise, but we do encourage the exchange between people who realise that making an online publication in Cape Town is completely different from defending one’s publication in Bamako, Mali against government interference and terrorist threats. Some media in Africa will not survive the gathering storms, while others will make it through diversification, innovation, an exchange with other players in the African market, and with the passion of their publishers.

I wish you an interesting read of the diverse contributions that were debated in Accra. KAS Media Africa is proud to work with stakeholders in the media industry on the continent.

Christoph Plate

Participants - CEOs, MDs, editors-in-chief, academics and senior journalists from 16 different countries meeting in Accra, Ghana, to discuss entrepreneurial journalism in Africa.

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Times of despair, times of awakening

Times of despair, times of awakening

A historical overview of journalism and different media business models in the hyper-competitive global news market of the 21st Century

By Francis Mdlongwa

Francis Mdlongwa, Director of Rhodes University's Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership in South Africa.

I would like to start by sincerely thanking the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) for kindly inviting me to be a speaker at this important conference, which seeks to look back and forward on how to strengthen Africa's journalism and its media firms at a time of rapid and unrelenting change in the media industry worldwide.

KAS's Africa Media Programme has a long and distinguished collaboration with my institute, the Sol Plaatje Institute (SPI) for Media Leadership at Rhodes University in South Africa. The SPI was set up in 2002 to specifically pioneer the education and training of high-level African media managers and leaders in media management through the provision of professional and certificated short courses and a postgraduate media management qualification – the only formal qualification in this field in Africa and the developing world.

For nearly 10 years, up to 2010, KAS financially supported the well-known Africa Media Leadership Conference series, which KAS and the SPI jointly staged annually in a different African country to discuss and map out the future of Africa's media trajectory.

We produced three books that captured nicely the key discussions of the last three of these conference series – books that have become valuable educational and information repositories and practical tools for the African media, its journalists and scholars on how to explore the transformation of Africa's journalism so that it continues to play a crucial and relevant role among our citizens and makes a meaningful contribution to democracy.

Let me, therefore, pay tribute to KAS for its principled, pivotal and continuing role in aiding the collaboration of African media and journalists to share and exchange critical lessons, knowledge and understandings on how to re-shape journalism and media in Africa to become more sustainable in a world which media scholar Alfred Hermida (2010) says is today marked by 'ambient journalism' – that is, journalism which primarily creates audiences' awareness about issues but fails to contextualise, or give background and meaning to unfolding key news events.

My presentation is divided into three parts. The first broadly looks at where we have come from over the past decade of the great "promises and perils" of digital and social media, as well as the then emerging business models for media. Secondly, I sketch out where we, as journalists and media, appear to be now; and conclude by looking into the place and role of African journalism and media in the increasingly uncertain, ambiguous and fluid era in which we now live.

A decade of promises

A decade ago, Africa – as did the rest of the world – feverishly stood on the cusp of what technology determinists promised was 'a golden new era of journalism' that would unfold on the back of the internet and its sibling Web 2.0, as well as digital and social media, that had just begun to take hold of much of the world at the time.

Several media analysts and commentators, including the 2003 authors of the now famed *We Media*, Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis; and Jay Rosen, who coined the phrase "The People Formerly Known as the Audience" (2006); and others saw the emerging technologies as heralding an unprecedented "democratisation" and renewal of journalism.

The internet and the web were seen as empowering many voices – mostly of the rural poor and of other neglected segments of our populations, like the views of women, who are the majority population in most parts of the world but remain conspicuous in the media by their absence – to be heard and their concerns forcefully brought into the public sphere.

New types of journalisms such as citizen journalism, user-generated content, blogs and a myriad of web-based discussion forums became the bywords of this new and exciting world order. In this new, revitalised world of journalism, we were told that ordinary citizens, aided by the new technologies, would take part in the creation, dissemination and consumption of news which they had co-produced, marking a radical paradigm shift from centuries-old practices which had largely given media freedom only to those who owned the press (Bowman and Willis, 2003).

Media executives and senior journalists discuss evolving business models and share experiences, Accra, Ghana.

The new journalisms would unleash what some called "the wisdom of the crowds" (see, for example, Lorenz, J. et al., 2011). To some extent, these technology determinists who prophesied the morphing of a more transparent and open journalism were not so wrong. We began to see the mushrooming of newspaper websites and their digital editions in some instances; we saw many radio and television stations establishing multi-platform news organisations; and we began to see the emergence of so-called web-first news business models developing, along with the increased use of media applications (apps) and Twitter.

My summary only looks at a broad array of trends that we have seen in the past decade. We have to be mindful of the fact that Africa is a vast continent of 54 different countries, which are not homogenous but have different and specific economic, social, political and technological conditions. My analysis merely focuses on the broad trends that we have witnessed in most parts of Africa.

A cardinal sin that was committed by the owners of most journalistic enterprises, not only in Africa but throughout the world, at this period was an historic failure to properly strategise on who would pay for the extra effort and money needed to produce more and increasingly "free news" that was being beamed across to audiences using several platforms.

Let it be said that the lack of strategic foresight by media leaders on how to operate in an increasingly "chaotic" and, many analysts now say, "disorder" of the rampant information overload inadvertently caused an existential crisis for media and high-quality journalism, which costs money, a crisis which persists and appears to have deepened today.

An example to illustrate just one of the many negative impacts of providing free news to audiences by the media was the immediate haemorrhaging of hundreds of thousands of media jobs across the globe as media owners suddenly understood fully that there was simply no such thing as a free lunch!

Simultaneously, media revenues from circulation, audience ratings and advertising – the latter being the lifeblood of media for most of the last century – fell dramatically, portending the current financial and economic crisis in media and journalism.

In this "moment of despair", African media broadly fared somewhat better than the developed world primarily because the use of the internet and digital and social media on the continent were still in their infancy.

Africa's underdevelopment, such as the sheer lack of an enabling technology infrastructure, endemic poverty, digital illiteracy, among several other challenges, also, ironically, shielded the continent – especially its legacy newspapers – from the digital winds of change sweeping the world.

On the jobs' front, in the United States of America, 16,200 media jobs were lost between 2003 and 2012, according to the Pew Research Centre's 2014 report. Between 2007 and 2015, a total of 22,100 jobs were shed from US newsrooms, according to analyst Dale Maharidge (2016).

In the United Kingdom, more than 5,000 media jobs disappeared in the decade up to 2014 (Harding's Future of the News, 2015, page 6).

Even in South Africa, the leading *Business Day* daily newspaper ended its tradition of publishing two editions a day in April 2009; *The Weekender*, another South African newspaper, shut down and retrenched an unknown number of media staff in November 2009, and other local media firms laid off scores of staff as the toll of "free news" shook the market.

In terms of advertising and circulation revenues, the United Kingdom, for example, saw this income plunge by more than half over the past decade, from nearly £7-billion to just over £3-billion now, according to the *Press Gazette*, quoting a government report which was released in June 2018, ahead of the Cairncross Review. The review, led by Dame Frances Cairncross, is examining the sustainability of high-quality journalism in the UK. In comparative terms, print newspaper advertising in the US was nearly $45 billion in 2003 (Pavlik 2013). By 2010, this income had dropped to $23 billion (Ibid). It has to be emphasised that while print advertising was falling precipitously in developed nations, advertising from digital was only slowly climbing in most of these nations but its value was not enough to offset the huge revenue lost from traditional print.

Accurate figures on the performance of the media in Africa are not easily available, but there is anecdotal evidence that, while the newsroom bloodletting was taking place in much of the world, parts of Africa were experiencing a significant growth in the number of media outlets that were being established in the same period.

Thus, for example in Kenya, where because of deregulation and the opening up of the airwaves by the once one-party state which had had only one state-owned broadcaster, we began to witness the establishment of many commercial and community radio and television stations, which

L-R: Francis Mdlongwa (Sol Plaatje, Rhodes), Gwen Lister (Namibian Media Trust, Windhoek), and Mike Daka (Breeze FM, Chipata, Eastern Zambia)

Citi FM director of news programming Bernard Avle (right) reviews Ghana's rapidly evolving digital media landscape.

lifted employment of media jobs there.

It must be noted that advertising and circulation revenues in most African countries generally remained steady at this stage.

Indeed, this has been the broad picture of developments of the media in much of Africa and in other developing regions such as in Asia and Latin America, where, for example, the circulations of some legacy newspapers have, in fact, expanded, and not shrunk – then and now.

As well as the failure by the global media to foresee the upheavals that their business models would face following the advent of the net and digital and social media, the media industry across the world was ill-prepared to deal with what media scholars Tamara Witschge and Gunnar Nygren (2009) said was both the "deprofessionalisation" and "professionalisation" of the media by the new technologies.

On one hand, digital and social media "deprofessionalised" journalism by abolishing entry barriers to be a journalist while simultaneously "professionalising" journalism by making ordinary citizens become the Fifth Estate – that is, by holding the traditional media or the Fourth Estate to account by checking on the veracity of its journalism and exposing shoddy or inaccurate reporting (Ibid).

This phenomenon was to later have a huge and largely negative impact on the credibility and/or trust of legacy media's business models by undermining its most crucial and single currency and the most critical reason why audiences have supported journalism in the past six centuries.

I will return to this theme later in my address. I cannot conclude this part of my presentation without touching on the new – some might call desperate – measures by the media to reverse the negative economic decline of their organisations in the "always-on, always-connected" digital age.

Most print media houses – clearly the hardest-hit by the advances of digital and social media – took to establishing the much-hyped "paywalls", both hard and soft; a range of other different models of subscriptions; and "native advertising" (also known as branded content), to stem the tide of this near economic collapse.

Except for *The New York Times*, the *Financial Times* of London and *The Wall Street Journal*, all of which have thrived under some form of paywalls, strong research evidence shows that most of these paywalls have failed to do the job at most large-scale legacy print media in developed countries.

Some of the newspapers there are now re-opening their once-enclosed news gardens. Of course, there are a few examples of small towns and cities where such paywalls have been, and are still successful – and this is because newspapers there would be enjoying a virtual monopoly and, it must be acknowledged, are also providing what their audiences regard as news content that has both value and utility to them.

For most parts of Africa in the past decade, paywalls have remained only experimental for most newspapers. However, we are now seeing more African newspapers beginning to implement these walls, especially on what they consider to be their premium news content. Examples of such newspapers abound and include the *Daily*

News and the *Financial Gazette* in Zimbabwe; some newspapers in Botswana and South Africa; and a few in Egypt.

Whether these efforts are bearing financial fruit or not, is hard to tell in the absence of accurate statistics on the impact of their walls and the sheer unwillingness by a significant number of African media to be transparent and open about their business operations.

Needless to say, the issues of transparency and openness are both key ethical and journalistic tenets which these media themselves paradoxically demand and expect from other key societal stakeholders.

Instead of creating paywalls, East Africa's largest media group – Nation Media which owns several newspapers, radio and television stations – launched an innovative money transfer system in 2012, working with a local bank, for Kenyans in the diaspora.

This was, of course, a follow-up to the establishment of East Africa's highly successful, world-first mobile phone money transfer system known as M-PESA, which was created by mobile phone group Safaricom in Tanzania in 2015. Regrettably, I have just learnt from East African colleagues who are at this conference that the Nation Media's money transfer system apparently collapsed because of challenges involving its implementation. However, the *Nation*'s money transfer system showed an innovative use of emerging digital technology, as well as an effort by the Nation Media Group to try to diversify its revenues to support its business model.

The *Nation* – and I am sure other African media as well – simply found it inappropriate to impose a paywall in East Africa primarily because of a likely resistance from audiences and the high cost of data use, a key and unresolved challenge in most of Africa even today.

As Harding's Future of the News report noted in 2015, 60% of the world's population still does not have access to the internet, and a significant number of those without the net live on our beautiful continent.

So did the promised new journalisms help bridge the news content gap between Africa's information-poor and information-rich, and between urban and rural areas, or make Africa's media more sustainable or profitable?

A number of studies show that, if anything, the "digital divide" has broadly widened and, in some instances, worsened, despite modest improvements in some African nations, notably South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Mauritius. The business models of most African media are also coming under greater economic and financial pressure than ever before.

The way we are now

Over the past few years, several new business models have been suggested for the financially troubled media worldwide. In some cases, these are being experimented with by media in developed nations, along with paywalls and "native" advertising, as competition for increasingly fragmenting audiences, who have rapidly expanding menus of news content and programmes, has heightened.

The sustainability of both global and African media, therefore, looks increasingly under

Burkhardt Hellemann, Head of KAS Office in Ghana, listens on as Niamey-based investigative journalist Moussa Aksar discusses the plight of reporters in the Sahel.

mounting financial and economic pressure as we meet at this conference, appropriately examining "entrepreneurial journalism".

I am sure we are all familiar with efforts of major news media such as *The New York Times* of staging important social events, including hosting cross-Atlantic luxury cruises and others to the Middle East, that attract some rich members of its audiences for a price as a way of generating extra income.

Other revenue-generating efforts include attracting audiences to donate money to media firms of their choice; an intensification by media to use news videos and podcasts to widen and strengthen their content distribution and net more revenue; efforts to monetize mobile journalism, though this does not appear to be gaining much traction so far except among the young; and efforts to seek either governmental funding or funding from audiences and corporates to run non-profit news outlets. There is another emerging digital media business model that seeks to accommodate audiences who only want to pick one or two news stories or programmes from several web-based media houses at once, and not to subscribe to the whole bouquet that might be on offer.

This is known as micro-payments. So, a news consumer might want to choose one story to read from, say, CNN Digital; one from BBC Digital; one from another media in what we now call "news snacking" by audiences. In other words, audiences are increasingly being picky and wanting to select only the stories which they believe matter to them – the news that people can use!

Other media groups in developed nations are also experimenting with what media analysts Jameson Hayes and Geoffrey Graybeal (2011) call "micro-earnings". This is a business model where a media house creates a synergetic relationship with its audiences but especially with its "social influencers" – celebrities or high-flyers who have a large number of followers in today's networked economy. As these influencers share a media house's news content with their followers or friends, the influencers get rewards just like you would get rewards for frequently flying on a particular airline, and the influencers are rewarded through points, a digital-type of currency or in real money.

The more the influencers and their followers share a media's content with others in their social network, the more rewards these influencers and their followers get. This particular business model needs a digital bank that would create a virtual currency and be the mediator between the media, on one hand, and those influencers who are maximising the sharing and dissemination of that media's news content or programmes, on the other hand.

Where does Africa stand in all of this? Again, only sketchy information on these developments is available from Africa. I look forward to hearing about the novel journalism and business models that are being contemplated or are being applied in different African regions from friends and experts who are attending this conference.

In particular, I am interested in understanding how, for example, state or trust funding and audience membership funding ensure that a media firm remains editorially independent from those who are financing it at a time when issues of the media being "captured by vested interests" has rightly become a hot public topic not just for governments and political parties, but for the media itself.

What is increasingly clear is that journalists and media houses from Abidjan to Nairobi and from Cairo to Cape Town and Johannesburg are working feverishly to ensure that their journalism offerings are increasingly multi-media, with strong indications that even legacy newspapers have now entered the broadcasting sector, especially that of television, to try to stave off financial collapse of their organisations and, with it, of their journalism.

And yet, it must be noted, these new broadcasting stations are facing a new and heightening competition, mostly on broad lifestyle programming, from internet streaming video services of companies ranging from South Africa's Africa-wide MultiChoice/DSTV, which is, itself, in financial trouble because of falling premium subscribers; to the American networks such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and so on.

Complicating an already hyper-competitive media ecosystem for Africa and the rest of the world has been the rapid disruptive emergence of news aggregators such as Facebook's Instant News Articles; Google's Accelerated Mobile News Pages; and Apple's News Pages, etc.

These global technology platforms have not only become the news disseminators but are increasingly taking over the global business of news through value-addition, according to several studies.

Rasmus Nielsen and Sarah Ganter (2018), for example, warn in a paper just released on the operations of these "digital intermediaries" that the news platforms of Facebook, Google, and Apple are increasingly taking over control of media's editorial, financial, and communication levers across the world and are "reshaping how news is distributed and, by extension, produced and funded" (page 1601).

Another notable media commentator, Nick Srnicek, writing in his 2017 book Platform Capitalism, says the new global platforms' business models are based on extracting audiences' personal data which they sell to third parties as these platforms seek to create a network economy that they monopolise and control.

Srnicek (Ibid) says the analytics or algorithms used by these platforms remain opaque. Indeed, these algorithms have been blamed for spreading "fake news", especially during the 2016 US presidential election, that is blighting our world today and is challenging the future and sustainability of journalism and media organisations across the entire globe.

In their paper, Nielsen and Ganter add ominously: "We are, as individual, ordinary users, increasingly transparent to and monitored by (these) large technology companies that we rely on (2018:1611)." In this regard, let me note that the role and place that these digital platforms play in journalism and media was actually the focus of the 13th Summit of the World Media Economics and Management Conference (WMEMC), which my Institute hosted in Cape Town from 7-9 May this year. Details of the deliberations of this summit, the first held in Africa in nearly 30 years, can be found at www.wmemc.org.

However, may I repeat some key points of what I told the 300-plus delegates from across the world at this WMEMC summit:

"... Should humanity allow a triopoly of Google, Facebook and Apple, aided by Twitter, Amazon and a few other global technological giants such as Alibaba, to define who we are and our future?
"Should humanity allow them to define our values and beliefs; to define our ethics and moral standards; and, above all, to redefine what our centuries-old democracy should be – all in the name of 'likes', 'mentions', 'tweets', 'followers' and 'trending stories', which are posted on these platforms under the guise of 'enlightenment' of our globalised world?
"Should humanity in this 'brave twenty-first century' allow these technological platforms to define and run – virtually solo and almost with impunity and without any meaningful regulation except for Europe's nascent efforts of enacting the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – a global 'platform economy' that takes over the work of mainstream media and of hundreds of thousands of dedicated scribes who have for centuries provided humanity with mostly credible, high quality and ethical journalism?"

Just a week before this conference (in September 2018), UNESCO released a handbook which looks in-depth at the challenge that is posed to the future of journalism and media by not only these platforms but by digital and social media which thrives on these platforms in what the handbook sees as an increasing threat of "fake news" (Posetti and Ireton, 2018).

The handbook says there is a new "disinformation war", a war in which "journalism and journalists have become prime targets" (Ibid). (Please also see the NiemanLab at http://www.niemanlab.org/2018/09/fighting-back-against-fake-news-a-new-un-handbook-aims-to-explain-and-resist-our-current-information-disorder.

The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at

Oxford University also warned in a report, released just before this conference, that the role of news in social media had reached what it described as an "inflection point" as a result of fears about misinformation and privacy issues, as well as content clutter and declining relevance, according to Nic Newman (2018).

In short, there are increasing voices around the world, especially from the EU which in May this year adopted the GDPR, to have some governmental regulation of the operations of these super-technological monopolies, with many people calling for the setting up of parallel independent platforms that are run as public trusts (e.g. Srnicek, 2017; *Press Gazette*, 2018).

To conclude this section, the economic turbulence that has long engulfed media and journalism in developed nations is upon us, but are we prepared for it? Have we learned and understood the mistakes and lessons of the early technological adopters of developed nations so that we, in Africa, minimise their negative impacts on our media and journalism?

The future and concluding remarks

The new journalisms that are being waved these days as "saviours" of our journalism include the following: explainer journalism, which, we are told, must seek to unpack the complexities and significance of a news story; solutions journalism, which must aim at finding and recommending solutions to audiences' real-life problems; data journalism, which must mine data from a range of sources and use graphs and multimedia to unearth hidden news stories; and so on.

For those of you who have been in this profession as long as I have, I am sure you will all agree that there is nothing new in these "new forms" of journalisms: what is being raised as "new" is exactly what any self-respecting professional journalist ought to have been doing all along and must continue to do going forward!

Having said this, I must, however, emphasise the need for journalists and media across the world to seek increased financial and human resources that are aimed at boosting investigative journalism in particular if our noble profession is to regain its waning public trust and remain relevant in the face of an onslaught by the authors of fake news and "alternative facts" of the Donald Trump era.

The media firms and journalisms that will survive the current crisis of disinformation, misinformation and mal-information in the "attention economy" will be those that are not only trusted by audiences but those that will seek to be more transparent and more open in the ways of their journalistic practices.

Because transparency is the new objectivity in the 21st century (Sambrook, 2012), media and their journalists must now disclose real and potential conflicts of interests in their reporting; they should tell their audiences who their news sources are and not simply say that these are "informed sources" (after all, all news sources must be informed; otherwise they are of no use to journalists); how these news sources know what they claim to know; the evidence which should stand up in a competent court of law which these sources have to back up their claims, etc.

Let me also underscore a few critical issues if journalism and media are to survive in this turbulent and hyper-competitive century and beyond.

- Media houses must endeavour to pay their journalists and other media workers decent salaries and create favourable working conditions to stave off poor quality and often unethical journalism that plays into the hands of "fake news" and the widespread "brown envelope" journalism syndrome in Africa.
- Media houses must invest in high-level, all-round university education and training for both their journalists and media managers so that these workers are capacitated with holistic knowledge, understandings and work competencies of practising journalism and of managing and leading their media in an agile manner at a time of discontinuous change. I ask you to send your media leaders to my Institute and other universities which have emerged in recent years to provide such

education and training.

- Quality news and programmes, as defined mostly by audiences' changing tastes and habits but with our judicious editorial and ethical judgements, will always triumph above the current "news noise"(Harding, 2015) and the shrills of "alternative facts". We must, therefore, hold our editorial freedom dear and guard against any erosion of journalism's credibility because this is what defines a successful business model of any media, more so now when we are being engulfed by false news.

We do not want to end up in a world in which US media analysts Thomas Davenport and John Beck warned about in their 2001 book, *The Attention Economy: Understanding the New Currency of Business*, where they saw the increasing information overload of the current century causing an "Attention Deficit Disorder" (ADD).

ADD, they noted, was already afflicting most people across the world, disrupting their attention to news and information, disrupting their work and study options, disrupting their decision-making and family life where, for example, we increasingly see spouses bringing their laptops, tablets and mobiles to bedrooms. Our social lives are under severe stress!

The two authors say that if the information overload is not arrested quickly so that we get our attention back, we are in for unprecedented social turmoil. In their words: "If attention is the scarcest good (in the 21st Century), people will ultimately realise that they should not trade it away lightly. We believe that knowledge workers will eventually realise the value of their attention, and anyone who wants it will have to pay a high price (2001:221).

"The trend of more information competing for less attention can't go on forever. Ultimately, people will begin to withdraw from the stress of an attention-devouring world, and information providers will begin to focus on quality, not quantity (Ibid)," they noted.

They then stated starkly: "For those who don't need to pay attention in order to make a living, the world will become much quieter. The rich will be able to live in attention-conservation zones, and ordinary folks will save up to vacation in environments in which attention can be devoted solely to loved ones, bodily processes, and a few carefully chosen attention stimuli. In the end, the greatest prize for being able to capture attention will be the freedom to avoid it." (Ibid).

After painting a somewhat gloomy future of journalism, let me end with two quotable quotes which perhaps give us some optimism in our troubled and uncertain times:

- John Nerone, a leading media scholar from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in the US, had this to say in his essay entitled The Death (and rebirth) of working class journalism in 2009: "Journalism will find its future when it finds its audience, and that audience will be many hued, sexually diverse, and composed of mostly workers (page 355)".

- To which British legendary social and media analyst James Curran (2010:466), writing on how millennials and Nerone appeared to be gleefully celebrating the death of journalism as we know it today, sarcastically commented: "In short, this view can be summarised as: things will get better because they are getting worse." However, Curran emphatically noted: "A journalism Armageddon is not nigh: sandwich boards can be put away (page 469)."

- To which I would add that this will only be for a short time unless journalists and media across the world begin a serious conversation to engage their audiences, discover their true and changing news and programme needs and wants, and begin an unprecedented way of adequately attending to these on the platforms which audiences prefer. For me, it is clear that we have to move backwards, literally to the basic tenets of journalism, in order to move forward.

Francis Mdlongwa is Director of Rhodes University's Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership in South Africa.

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2

Adapt or die in the era of pervasive change

Adapt or die in the era of pervasive change

Veteran Namibian journalist Gwen Lister's stark warning to newspapers

By Gwen Lister

Gwen Lister, founding editor of The Namibian newspaper.

The walls were closing in for the media and, at the height of apartheid rule in Namibia, many did not think it was the best idea to try to start an independent newspaper. But I thought it was worth a shot.

After many months of clandestine planning and literally working under the cloak of darkness to source external funding, *The Namibian* finally came into being on 30 August 1985 with a 10,000-copy print edition sold out. And now, several decades later as it heads towards its 35th anniversary as the biggest-selling newspaper in the country, the rest – as they say – is history.

Much of our fame – or infamy in certain quarters – came about as a result of the fact that the new and independent newspaper had the audacity to give itself a name then only associated with the freedom struggle, or "terrorism", as the South African occupiers of the territory then known as South West Africa, labelled the fight to free the colony by SWAPO (South West African People's Organisation), a guerrilla movement.

At the time, we did not know quite when it would happen, but we were certain that the country would one day be named Namibia, even as we jumped the gun to call it thus.

The fact that it was a newspaper which sided with the oppressed black majority, openly practised advocacy journalism, and stood unashamedly for the self-determination and independence of the country, added insult to injury as far as our opponents were concerned.

'Guerilla typewriters'

We wanted to show the world what was happening under the jackboot of apartheid and, soon our reporting, which highlighted atrocities against the civilian population, would incur the wrath of the authorities, and attempts to silence us came thick and fast.

Despite incessant physical attacks on our premises – including shots fired at our bulletproof windows, teargas placed in our air conditioning, and several fire-bombings – we never missed an edition. These attacks had been in addition to the arrests, death threats, and campaigns of harassment and intimidation of myself and our reporting staff by the South African authorities.

The Namibian became known as one of what were called the "guerrilla typewriters" of Southern Africa – independent newspapers established in the face of either apartheid domination or under intolerant, one-party ruled African governments of the time.

But, the story of the survival of this newspaper against all odds is not the one I am here to talk about today. Instead, I will focus on the newspaper's one-of-a-kind ownership structure, namely the trust model, which may be the only one of its kind in Africa. It was this innovative yet flat structure which led to the foundation of the unique ethos of *The Namibian*.

To do so, I need to go back to the time when we finally received the good news that our project proposal for funding of an independent weekly newspaper in a dominantly pro-colonial media environment had met with success abroad.

We opted for the non-profit trust model which would own/publish *The Namibian*. There were other funded newspaper startups in Southern Africa in the 1980s which were privately-owned, but we felt that since taxpayers of other countries had footed the bill for our existence, we had an obligation to them not to allow ourselves or other individual shareholders to profit from a donor-funded project, if indeed the newspaper ever became sustainable.

In itself, it seemed like an unlikely prospect at the time, but if indeed *The Namibian* one day became financially viable, or if it was closed down by the authorities, which was more conceivable, the income and/or assets would be invested in the broader Namibian community.

Launch of Namibian Media Trust

So we drew up a deed of trust, which was fine-tuned over time, and today the mission of the Namibian Media Trust is "to generally further the principles of press freedom and freedom of expression as well as access to information". Included among the issues we address in the promotion of these objectives are excellence in journalism, adherence to media ethics and professionalism, and working for media literacy and capacity-building of journalists and media professionalism.

From the outset, we knew that the commercial viability of *The Namibian* over the medium to long term would require that it became sustainable, and so we registered the newspaper as a Proprietary Limited (Pty Ltd) company. If it made money over time, then profits would be ploughed back into the newspaper as needed and the rest would go into the Trust to realise its objectives.

The newspaper would embrace a fiercely independent editorial policy, as well as an on-the-job training project; it would put principle before profit, and it would exhibit a keen sense of social responsibility.

Independence came in 1990, and donor funding dried up. It was now make or break for the newspaper, and times were tough.

I had never had formal training as a journalist, let alone any management or financial experience when I became editor just ten years after I had started out as a reporter, and we faced a still formidable task ahead. Against all odds, the newspaper survived the apartheid era. The challenge remained to put it on an even keel financially, and over the ensuing years there were several SOS situations as we made the transition. Some of the challenges included how to convince the predominantly white business community, which had turned their backs on us during the apartheid era, to advertise in or buy the newspaper post-independence.

Most were still hostile and suspicious of what had become known as the "SWAPO newspaper" because we had sided with liberation. At the same time, we needed to subsidise the selling price of the newspaper in order to make it accessible to the broader Namibian community, who were poor and marginalised, and so the income we derived from sales would be unlikely to take us to sustainability.

Deadlines of daily newspapering

The newspaper had become a daily on 1 April 1989 – the day on which the United Nations' settlement plan for Namibia began. This brought

Gwen Lister (right) and Senegal Press Agency's Papa Thierno Fall zoom in on media funding structures.

with it inexorable deadlines, and the perils of printing at a press prepared to take our money but not favourably disposed to putting the interests of *The Namibian* over those of the conservative publications it in turn owned.

The Namibian population was less than two million, scattered over a vast geographic area, and so distribution was another huge impediment in a country with a poor transport infrastructure. The day-to-day running of the newspaper, with a small staff complement, combined with the editorial and management challenges I faced on a daily basis, meant that the trust was not formalised until I stepped down as editor in 2011, some 26 years later.

I had always instinctively embraced what I called a lean and mean approach, along with scrupulous accountability to donors. Thus, our finances were tightly controlled; there could be no wastage; and salaries remained low and benefits were minimal. There was a very flat structure, even when it came to remuneration because it was necessary in order to survive. This also required the kind of people – journalists and other staff – who were passionate and committed and prepared to do with less in order to serve the community. Our later success story would not have been possible without their sacrifice.

The Namibian would stick to its independent editorial policy at Independence and thereafter. We believed this was vital for our credibility in the eyes of the people we served, including our loyal readers and supporters over the years since the inception of the newspaper. The liberation movement was now in government and we would still need to continue to hold power to account as we had done in the fight against apartheid.

Surviving the post-independence era

SWAPO was amenable to *The Namibian* as the country gained its freedom because of the newspaper's contribution to the struggle, but they too would soon become irritated by the probing eye of a critical press. Slowly but surely the majority of the business community were won over, I think mainly due to our independent editorial policy, and they began to advertise. By late 1994, we had managed to turn the corner financially and finally reach break-even.

The Namibian was, I think, the only newspaper in Southern Africa to have survived the transition from donor funding to self-sufficiency by going it alone. It was a proud moment, and over the ensuing years it grew to become the biggest-selling newspaper in Namibia.

I am sure that the trust model played a role in making this happen. If we had had shareholders interfering in content and breathing down our necks in pursuit of profit at all costs, our editorial integrity would almost certainly have been compromised.

To further protect the ethos of principle over profit, as well as fiercely guard the spirit of independent reporting closely guided by adherence to a code of ethics, the editor would head *The Namibian* and report to the board of directors and through it, to the Trustees.

The Trust was also important in the sense that staff could work in an atmosphere in which they knew they were not being exploited by greedy shareholders. Once we became profitable, we put back into the staff in terms of increasing benefits such as introducing three months of paid maternity leave, a 13th cheque and even a mid-year discretionary bonus, as well as 100% medical aid cover – and also into social responsibility projects which started almost simultaneously.

In the knowledge that a majority of youth in Namibia were unemployed and dispirited, we started a weekly section, the Youthpaper, to uplift and inform this important and growing sector of our population. We also came up with the idea of a Namibia Newspaper Cup football competition, which saw young players from the 14 regions of the country, compete against one another. Those with talent were taken up into our premier league clubs and even our national Brave Warriors team. The Newspaper Cup is an event which is still going strong today. Later, when a new editor succeeded me, he added other educational programmes such as a national debating competition, among others, to our community investment initiatives.

It is worthwhile noting – just as an aside – for the purpose of backgrounding our discussions, that there was, at the time of the 1991 adoption of the Windhoek Declaration on a Free, Independent and Pluralistic Media, a lively discussion around the issue of media ownership and its impact on journalism.

At the time, the declaration defined the independent press as one "independent from government, political or economic (ie corporate) control". Later there was broader acceptance of the concept of diverse forms of ownership, with the proviso that an independent editorial policy be respected regardless of who owned which media.

Newspapers must adapt or die

But as we gather together here in 2018, we are all aware that the newspaper environment has changed dramatically and for the worse in the last few years and sustainability – for media both on and offline – is now a major challenge.

It took longer to happen in Africa than it did in other parts of the world, but the attrition in terms of sales and advertising has begun as the digital world overtakes print, and peoples' appetite for serious news has largely dissipated in favour of slavish social media adherence.

All newspapers need to adapt or die in this predominantly negative environment, more challenging perhaps than the draconian political era of the past when independent publications in Southern Africa were engaged in a fight for their lives.

Meanwhile, in recent years, the character of the Namibian Media Trust has changed. Once just the publisher of *The Namibian*, it now also co-owns a few properties, a printing press, and derives dividends from this entity as well. Its weakness, if one could call it that, is that it is still a primarily print-centred initiative, and in years to come will have to diversify in order to mitigate against the diminishing lifespan of the newspaper industry and possibly subsidise *The Namibian* as a last resort.

The Namibian Media Trust, which could be described as something of a hybrid, could also be challenged in the future by decreasing profits from its commercial entities if we stick purely to print. As a lifelong lover of print, I am ever hopeful that if we strengthen quality journalism, and win back lost credibility by getting closer to the people, also adapting our content to changed taste, we can revive newspapers to a certain extent. But there are not many who agree with me, and to them the future would appear to be predominantly a digital one, although this option also faces sustainability challenges.

The Trust model also allows for the sourcing of donor/development funds to support media freedom, free expression and Access To Information (ATI), for example. With the assistance of the Finnish Embassy in Namibia, the Namibian Media Trust currently hosts the secretariat of the Action Coalition, a group of civil society organisations campaigning for an ATI law in Namibia.

The Trust also lends its support to journalism training and professionalism in the country, as well as to the Editors' Forum of Namibia and helped it to rewrite the Journalists' Code of Conduct for print, broadcast and online media. The Trust also backs efforts for a self-regulatory media system in Namibia and thereby the office of the Media Ombudsman, among other projects.

The Namibian, through the Namibian Media Trust, has also recently sourced funding to support the strengthening of an in-house investigative journalism and training project. In striving to extend its reach beyond the borders of Namibia, the Trust has committed to a small two-year contribution to the annual Guillermo Cano Press Freedom Award of UNESCO.

Because Namibia has a more free environment than media in many other countries in Africa, we believe it is important that we put our money where our mouths are, and join hands on a continental level to promote press freedom, free speech and related rights. The NMT is also working on launching a Free Speech for Africa award in concert with like-minded partners on the continent. We are hoping this will help consolidate respect for these freedoms across Africa, and to pay tribute to those who are paving the way towards the attainment of these important goals.

And even if, in time, *The Namibian* were to become a smaller, more niche publication due to the inexorable decline of print, its operations could also be subsidised by other income of the Trust and not necessarily non-media or external sources of a more philanthropic nature.

This in turn, I believe, would allow the newspaper and whatever digital presence it chooses to occupy in the future, to remain independent editorially, support quality investigative journalism and continue to resist those forces which may seek to interfere with or tamper with this hard-won ethos.

To conclude, the Trust model has worked for us to date. It is one which may not work for everyone or be applicable to the current changeable media landscape. The way in which we began *The Namibian* decades ago, with a small group of committed, activist journalists fuelled with the passion to rid the country of apartheid rule and bring about Independence, is what forged our ethos in a time when print was strong.

But the media environment today, and the people who work in it, have changed since our inception, and adaptation, reinvention and continued adherence to the founding objectives will be a necessary component down the line in order to keep good journalism alive.

Gwen Lister is the founding editor of The Namibian newspaper.

3

Nurturing Africa's next generation of journalists

Nurturing Africa's next generation of journalists

Lessons from Uganda on creating 'a better world'

By Abaas Mpindi

Abaas Mpindi, head of the Media Challenge Initiative in Uganda.

I run the Media Challenge Initiative, a youth-driven not-for-profit which is building the next generation of journalists in Uganda and Africa. We, ideally, work with journalism students by giving them the practical skills to increase their chances of employment and committing them to use journalism to make the world a better place for all. People always ask me why journalism? Whenever I am asked this question, it brings flash backs of my early life, of my illiterate grandmother who could not read and write. At an early age, I was her journalist because I read and interpreted stories from newspapers for her.

I should also mention that most of the times the newspapers would be a week or sometimes a month old. In translating to her the different stories, I discovered that I had the immense task of making sure I produced nothing but the truth to her because this changed her world and made her happy.

Fast-forward to today, I believe that journalism can make the world a better place through the stories journalists tell and how those stories are told. Most importantly, I believe that if the good force of journalism is to change the world we must have good, objective, empowered, socially conscious and just journalists. I was asked to speak about what African journalism needs, and on behalf of young journalists to make a passionate appeal to those who own and manage media houses to invest in grooming the next generation of African journalists.

Favourite journalists

My firm belief is that investing in the next generation of journalists is what African journalism needs. I know a lot of talented and experienced older journalists are exiting into the communication and public relations world, where they make a lot of money. That means we have to plan for that exodus.

One of my favourite journalists in Uganda, Daniel Kalinaki, once wrote in his article "Will the last journalist out please switch off the newsroom lights?" He was illustrating the curious case of the *Daily Monitor*, where 25 years after its founding, none of its original cohort of journalists was still on the staff. Worse still, even those young journalists who the founders recruited and trained a decade afterwards had almost all left the newspaper.

That is a moment for reflection for all of us. And it gets worse because, as the exodus of experienced journalists happens, young journalists who join the market lack the skills and versatility required for the 21st century media market.

The youngsters come to an industry that has no mentors for them but has expectations of them to deliver good journalism. Ladies and gentlemen, this is how the cycle continues. Every year I see young journalists work in the industry for one or two years, make a name for themselves and then move on to make more money in other industries. We also get graduates into the space and we expect them to deliver good quality journalism that the world can pay for. We are wrong! We are wrong!

Besides this, there are other challenges facing African journalism that other speakers have highlighted. There is the shrinking media space, loss of trust, lack of resources to tell stories in their context, political pressure and manipulation. These challenges undermine context-sensitive, nuanced objective reporting on critical issues.

Focusing on journalism education

Now that I have made a passionate call to invest in the next generation of journalists in Africa, and probably have convinced you that this is what African journalism needs, let me now look at what we can do to invest in grooming the next generation of journalists by focusing on journalism education and practice.

First and foremost, I want to posit that grooming the next generation of journalists will require a revamped journalism education with more resources so that our young people are prepared to tell stories that will change the continent for good. For us to achieve that, we will need:

- Investment in equipment and training studios that are available and accessible to everyone in universities and training institutes. In Uganda, you have 50 to 100 students in one journalism class who have to use one camera and one tutor;
- Practical training emphasised in curricula across all journalistic mediums (writing, videography, photography, radio, online, etc.);
- A focus on digital skills for the 21st century in order to produce technology-savvy journalists;
- Media entrepreneurship training and ways to practice journalism without working in a traditional media house since formal jobs can be few; and
- Knowledge-based journalism training where it is compulsory to take a journalism course with other liberal arts subjects such as political science, economics, health, and law. This will strengthen the journalists' holistic understanding of the world while also taking into account the passion of the student. This will give us well-versed, technical and informed journalists.

Journalism education must be accompanied by improved internship experiences for students and recent graduates, where interns are not bringing tea, photocopying and printing; they should be reporting, getting their bylines out there, and making connections with reporters in the field. We also need a transfer of knowledge and experiences through structured mentorship programmes and connection opportunities where current practising journalists are paired or interact with young journalists.

We have piloted a media mentorship programme in Uganda where we are connecting young journalists with media mentors, and the exchange has been productive. We have seen mentors invite our fellows to job shadow in their TV studio and to work on a news project together.

In the end, our journalism education must produce what at the Media Challenge Initiative we have come to call the "ONE WO/MAN-ARMY JOURNALIST'" – a journalist who fits the requirements of the 21st century market. We are responding to the unique demand by moving away from the tradition of specialisation to a new disruption of multimedia skills aimed at producing content for multiple platforms.

Beyond the skills, African journalists must see themselves as "journalists/leaders" practising journalism for social change. This entails moving away from the "watchdog" role to the "guide dog" role.

Related to leadership, African journalists need to own and lead the telling of stories that come out of the continent. Therefore, the best, most well researched, most nuanced stories covering every angle of news in African countries should be coming from African journalists who know their people, cultures and countries the best.

This does not mean that foreign reporters are not welcome. It basically means that African reporters, who understand the context on the ground, lead the news narrative with dignity. And hopefully in time we can have a CNN or a BBC of our own setting a good agenda for Africa.

This is really my dream. As I conclude by inviting you to think not about today but about the journalists who will cover Agenda 2063 of the African Union and ask yourselves this question: what kind of journalists do we need to cover that dream and what is our contribution to that? Thank you for listening and I appeal to you to join me on our journey to build the next generation of journalists who will change our continent and our world – one story at a time. You can start by mentoring a new person!

Abaas Mpindi is the head of the Media Challenge Initiative in Uganda.

4

Measuring quality in journalism: how and what for?

Measuring quality in journalism: how and what for?

By Christoph Spurk

Christoph Spurk, lecturer and researcher, Institute of Applied Media Studies, Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland.

Introduction

It is self-evident for all of us at this conference that the business models for good journalism are under immense pressure, albeit to a different extent in different countries and contexts. In general, I am convinced that better knowledge about media products can be helpful to identify new opportunities and improve businesses. In the following presentation, I want to show how data on media quality can be gathered and how they can be used to improve the product and how they can be used in business.

Defining quality of media content

Quality is a **fuzzy notion**. Almost everybody understands something different under quality of journalistic content. This makes it difficult or impossible to measure. However, we use an approach mostly developed by German-speaking scholars, who have broken down the overall quality into **various qualities, or quality criteria**. These different criteria can be more easily assessed or measured in journalistic texts or units, be they print articles, radio emissions or TV videos.

In our research, we have elaborated on those quality criteria jointly with editors and reporters. It is important to note that there are some **basic** quality criteria – applicable almost universally – and some **specific** – contingent upon the type of media, or the topic of reporting. For example, we have some specific criteria for science journalism that are not required in general journalism. So the template can be adapted to specific requirements of media houses.

Basic Quality: method of content analysis

In Tanzania, we did a pilot project in 2017 called “Yearbook on Media Quality in Tanzania”, and we are now conducting the fully-fledged Yearbook 2018, with a large sample of participating media houses.

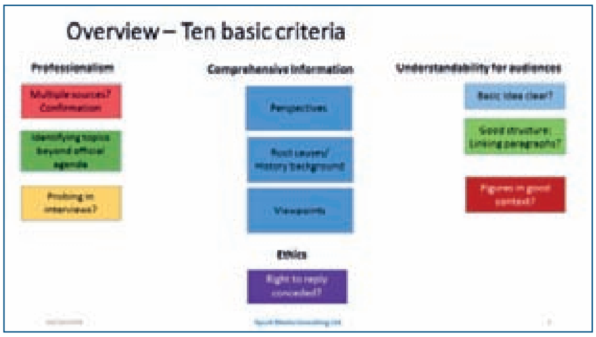
In Tanzania, we use 10 basic quality criteria to measure the status of quality. They fall into four broad categories, which are:

- Professionalism
- Understandability for the audience
- Comprehensiveness of information, and
- Ethics

Those ten criteria are (see also overview)

1. Multiple **sourcing**
2. Identifying **topics** beyond the official agenda
3. **Probing** in interviews
4. Units need to have a basic **clear-cut idea**
5. Units need to have a good formal **structure**
6. **Figures** need to be put into good context, and are understandable for the ordinary media consumer

7. Units should contain various **perspectives**
8. Units should contain information on **root causes** of problems and historical background
9. Units should contain various opinions and **viewpoints**
10. If relevant, the **right to reply** needs to be included.



Source: Spurk Media Consulting

Content analysis

The actual assessment is done by content analysis, which is a well known method in media research. It has the advantage of being very structured and systematic, as all journalistic units in the sample (print, TV, Radio, online) are assessed by the very same criteria, and in the same way. This makes the results comparable between different media genres and different media houses.

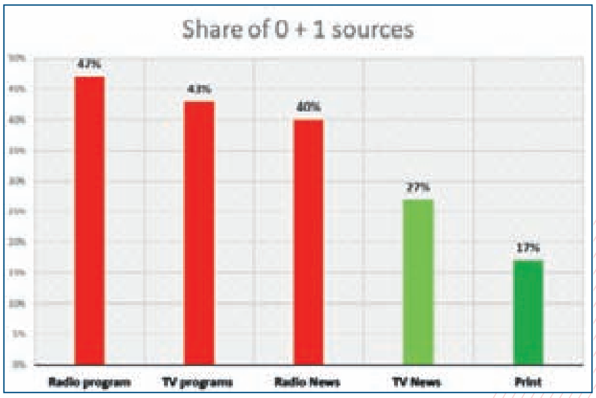
This assessment is actually done manually by assistants from Tanzania, that are called "coders" (a technical term as they give answers to questions by providing codes like 1 for "Yes", and 0 for "No"). The researchers from the University of Dar es Salaam are intensively trained by myself for at least five days, sometimes seven to eight days, with a lot of examinations in between and a tough selection process.

This is done in order to achieve a common agreement of assessing the different quality criteria. This guarantees that the assessment is as "objective" as possible.

Results: Examples from Tanzania

In order to get a feel for how this looks in reality, I will show you some examples from the Pilot Yearbook in Tanzania with regard to average results assessing the average quality in Tanzania.
We found some rather challenging findings.
For example:

- Far too often we find units with only one source, especially in radio news, and programmes. This is a major shortcoming, with regard to journalistic standards.
- Far too often, the Tanzanian media use government and other local authorities as sources. This is not to say that they should not use those authorities, but it calls for the use of other sources as well.
- Trigger of reporting: almost half of the journalistic units had press conferences and official launches of events as the initial trigger of reporting. The share of articles or units that used media's own initiative to report an issue was rather low. It looks like the Tanzanian media mostly follow the official agenda; meaning they hardly set an agenda on their own.
- Information in the Tanzanian media is generally superficial. Only a quarter of articles reported, to some extent, about the causes of a problem or the reasons of events.
- Opposing viewpoints: only 13% of units contained opposing viewpoints; all the rest had only one viewpoint, or various viewpoints, but who supported the same position.
- Figures not in good context: three quarters



Source: Spurk Media Consulting

of articles did not put the figures into good context, which means there was no attempt to try to explain the figures to the media consumers.

In addition, for each media house we produced individual performance sheets, which show the media house's performance for each quality criteria and compares it directly with the average and the highest performer in this category.

Usefulness: the obvious

We think quality assessments can be useful for media houses in various ways.

External check on quality

First, this external assessment is sort of a "brutal evidence of shortcomings", as it analyses content from a consumers' perspective. It is a mirror of what is actually presented or broadcast to audiences. This view was confirmed by most of Tanzania media houses which said that the Yearbook is a good reflection of the reality on the ground, although the media houses in Tanzania currently face a difficult situation, with lots of insecurity and self-censorship. But, even now they could report better. Thus, the main reasons for the shortcomings were negligence by reporters, editors and managers. Therefore, those results can obviously be used in training of reporters and editors. We have already had a few sessions with different media houses in Tanzania, and one has now decided to use our quality criteria to systematically train their reporters and editors in those quality criteria (and others).

Business perspective

On the other hand, the results on quality can lead to better financial outcomes for their media firms.

Increasing credibility with readers: There are many efforts to get more revenue directly from media consumers as advertising revenue is going down for many media houses. Some of these efforts are already successful. So, if quality is improved by external checking, it opens up new opportunities, for example, to increase credibility, to monetarise credibility ("we provide the background") with readers or viewers, by, for example, increasing subscriptions or charging a higher prices for existing subscriptions. This may especially work in times of doubts about many social and other non-professional media. It could also support online-only media efforts to start membership models to gain revenue for their media products, which is very close to subscription models.

Increasing Credibility with advertisers: It may open up opportunities to increase media houses' value with advertisers, especially if brand advertising is connected to the credibility of the medium environment.

Revitalising traditional advertising models: Based on data about the quality of content, plus better data about media consumers, for example on purchasing power and investment interests, a traditional advertising model can be created. That might, for example, work for local radio stations, which have a very local and, therefore, niche market, but could demonstrate that their programmes are of high quality and thus they could attract audiences of interest to the advertising industry.

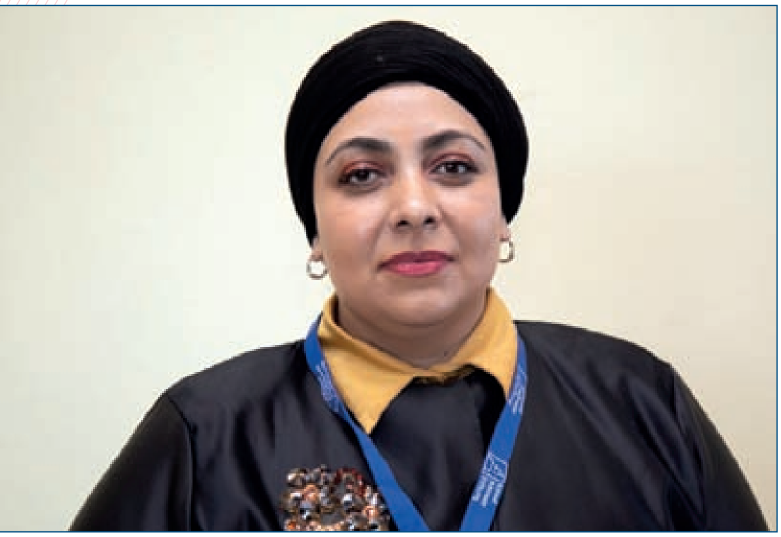
Christoph Spurk is a lecturer and researcher, Institute of Applied Media Studies, Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland.

5

Why good journalism costs money

Why good journalism costs money

By Khadija Patel



Khadija Patel, editor-in-chief of the Mail & Guardian in South Africa.

I think over the last day and a bit, our discussions have answered why good journalism costs money. Good journalism requires time. It requires money. It requires the skill and experience of people who are committed to finding the truth and reporting it.

But, it also takes more than that. It takes structures – whether they are non-profit organisations like trusts or for-profit companies that hold holy the aims of journalism, and it takes directors – whether they are trustees, shareholders, directors – who understand the work of journalists, and are prepared to invest in that work.

But in order for good journalism to exist it also requires the trust of society. Because around the world, the existence of journalism, its independence and credibility, is under attack.

Some of the world's most powerful people, such as US President Donald Trump, are easy to lampoon in this regard; they are complicit in the systemic undermining of the work of journalists.
When, in South Africa, I'm told by our sales people that a government department will sign a lucrative advertising deal if we send a reporter to cover their activities, it is the independence of the newsroom that is being casually threatened.

Fortunate

I'm fortunate to have a management team which will never expect us to do so; it's just an irritation that I have to negotiate. But, it's also dangerous when a senior editor at another news publisher tells me that this is exactly how they are doing their work now – trading ad deals for coverage.

When the second largest news publishing group in South Africa fires a columnist because that columnist has dared to call out the human rights abuses of a shareholder, then it is an attack on the independence of journalism.

The financial peril within which journalism exists is, in my opinion, the greatest threat to media freedom. And that's not counting big business and politicians who seek to thwart the work of journalists through force, or legislation, or financial manipulation.

It's not counting the tech companies that refuse to better engage with the problem of fake news being peddled on their platforms, while also pocketing the lion's share of digital advertising revenue.
It's not counting the harassment of journalists online and offline.

But I refuse to be demoralised.

Pushing words on street corners

I describe myself as pushing words on street corners. Journalism for me is a compulsion. It is my lifeblood. At the end of this year, I will turn 35, but I want to continue working as a journalist for at least another 30 years.

So, imagine my shock when at the World News Congress in Durban last year, a study forecasting when the last print edition of a news publisher will be sold, predicted 2030 as the year that the last newspaper will be sold in South Africa. While the *Mail & Guardian* was the first legacy newsroom I worked in, print continues there. And the truth is, I have never actually worked in a big money newsroom. I don't know what it is like to work in a newsroom where money is plenty, and space for innovation, ample.

My only experience of journalism is in environments of great volatility. So much so that my mother turned to me the other day, and asked: "Why do you always work for people with no money?" I've been at the *Mail & Guardian* for almost two years now, and before that I was at the helm of a startup digital news publication, *Daily Vox* which is aimed at urban-based, young South Africans. Prior to that, I worked for *Daily Maverick* for four years, and before that I published a community magazine doing everything from layout to selling advertising, and before that I worked on a now defunct digital native community website called fordsburg.com. Before that I was a blogger.

There are no clear, singular "right" answers for the challenges we face, or the opportunities that come. The structures supporting journalism must be nimble. And it must brace itself. And journalism, in and of itself, is not perfect.

Truth is journalism's only commitment

In order for us to continue to exist, journalism must be accurate, it must be accessible, it must be diverse, it must be relevant, it must be timely, again it must be relevant, and it must be independently produced.

Journalism's only commitment is to find the truth and report it. I take heart from the fact that it is journalists like ourselves who understand that the weaknesses in journalism cannot go unattended. At the *Mail & Guardian*, where I've been for almost two years now, I inherited a newsroom that had been decimated. Four editors in four years had left the newsroom reeling. Meanwhile, the powers above had made some disastrous investments. And it was journalism that was suffering.

So, I've spent the last two years ensuring that the principle of good journalism is re-enforced within the *Mail & Guardian*.

To do this, we've also created a trust – called Adamela – which is a vehicle for us to receive donor funding.

Khadija Patel is the editor-in-chief of the Mail & Guardian in South Africa.

6

The dilemma of Africa's media

The dilemma of Africa's media

How to become more independent of advertising

By Roukaya Kasenally

Dr Roukaya Kasenally, CEO of the African Media Initiative (AMI).

Introduction

Governments are important – even inevitable features of all governance structures. In Africa, their power, impact and entrenchment is even more resounding. The question that is often asked is how to establish and shape your ties with governments? How can a relational link – which is neither antagonistic nor subservient – be established? This is the dilemma that the media in Africa finds itself in.

In fact, one should realise that Africa is not a homogenous bloc. On the contrary, it is 55 countries with specificities in terms of their social, economic, political and technological conditions, albeit with certain similarities. This is reflected in its media landscape, which is quite diverse, with differences in media markets, market intelligence, level of regulation, types of media legislation and media organisational structures.

One of the most pressing concerns faced by all media in Africa is how to ensure financial sustainability in the face of dwindling audiences and growing competition from other forms of news sources. Financial sustainability is directly linked to the issue of advertising – a segment that has not always been fully exploited in Africa. The question posed in the title of this essay has no direct answer and perhaps should have been formulated differently: is it possible, or even desirable to be completely independent of government? In fact, one should not forget that governments are an important source of public information, and this is particularly relevant in Africa.

Context of media in Africa

By all economic and social indicators, Africa is believed to be on the rise. According to the World Bank figures for 2018, six of the 10 fastest growing economies are from Africa. This, by extension, should mean that the business of information and communication should also be booming.

However, the business environment is often affected by the political environments of individual countries, which range from open and progressive to closed and hostile. In the latter, the environment is not always conducive for private and independent media. Market dynamism is often dependent on the presence of a private sector and, in the case of media, acts as an important source of revenue in the form of advertising. Unfortunately, many parts of Africa either have inexistent or weak private sectors.

Another important feature to focus on is the obvious difference that exists between Francophone and Anglophone Africa, which often impacts on the manner in which media develops as a fully-fledged and autonomous body.

Africa's media landscape is also characterised in certain regions by sharp levels of polarity between an over-dominant state media that captures all the lucrative sources of funding, and a starved-off private media.

Although these polarities are starting to lessen, they are still there. Last but not least, the media in Africa, to varying degrees, continues to suffer from a chronic absence of professionalism and ethics. This has a direct impact on the ability of media to make a compelling business case.

However, there is still a lot of scope to ensure that media survives and even prospers. Africa has one compelling case in the size of its media market – a potential one billion people who are hungry for content and the opportunity here is to produce content that resonates with an African audience.

Dominant financing model: here to stay?

How does one promote a conducive environment for media in Africa? In fact, at the heart of this question is the need to fix what can be termed the relational power between the state and the media. In fact, there is an urgent need to review the methodology by which government advertising is disbursed.

Is it possible for the state to continue to "arbitrarily" decide which media house gets or does not get advertising? Should there not be an independent structure that attends to this? This speaks to the public service nature of government advertising, which, in the process, should be carried by all media platforms.

A conducive environment would allow for the media to benefit from a series of tax reliefs, as well as subsidies for the conduct of their business. For example, simple resources such as paper, ink or even generators that are made affordable and accessible can go a long way in allowing the media to function. Can the creation of a public media fund help palliate the problems of partial distribution of government-related advertising? Here again, it would be imperative that the methodology of the use of this fund be transparent and accessible to all media houses. An important issue to reflect upon when discussing sources of funding is not to forget that at times they can "corrupt" the media. This refers to the growing phenomenon of "media capture". In fact, ownership structures and relational systems see a growing presence of big corporate businesses in the production and distribution of information. This can easily taint the editorial integrity and independence of a news outlet. Therefore, it is imperative to reflect on the need for discernment and prudence when it comes to media funding.

Experimenting with new approaches

It is clear that the antagonistic relationship between the state and private media must be buried and that the media in Africa – be it state, public, private or independent – be viewed as an important feature of an open and progressive landscape.

It is a noted fact that there is a growing appetite for information in Africa and, therefore, that there is an audience that will be willing to pay/support a media outlet that provides a compelling and unique offer.

In a number of countries, crowdfunding is gaining a certain level of traction. Perhaps it is still too nascent to make firm conclusions as to its feasibility as a funding method.

A membership-based model is another experimental approach, with the example of *Daily Maverick* from South Africa offering some insights. *The Namibian* also offers an interesting approach to ensure that its independence and credibility are not jeopardised through the trust model.

A way forward

The larger picture to the question that needs to be answered is establishing the importance and relevance of the media in our contemporary society. Research undertaken by the African Media Initiative (AMI) points to the absence of fraternity within the media. Although it is normal for the media to be in competition, this does not exclude the fact that it could collaborate/join forces on bigger issues.

Resource sharing – both hard and soft – could be a means of cushioning burdensome costs. It would be interesting to see the potential of transnational cooperation among African media houses.

Calling upon key African institutions such as the African Union or the African Development Bank to support media in Africa is something worth reflecting upon. Last, but not least, African media houses have not sufficiently exploited the open data revolution. The capacity to harness data for landmark journalism can be a game-changer in the production and distribution of news.

Dr Roukaya Kasenally is the CEO of the African Media Initiative (AMI).

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Becoming independent of state advertising

Becoming independent of state advertising

Kenyan media shows the way to survive

By Joseph Odindo

Joseph Odindo, Group Editor of the Standard Media in Kenya.

The truth about dependence on government advertising is that it opens media to manipulation by the state. Yet, in many of our economies, where the private sector has yet to fully embrace media marketing, government is one of the biggest advertisers, dominating the revenue of many news publishing platforms which, without irony, profess a commitment to independent journalism.

At The Standard Media Group of Nairobi, where I work, government adspend five years ago made up 48% of our overall advertising revenue while at the rival Nation Media Group, Kenya's largest news publisher, the figure stood at 30%. It has been steadily falling and now government ad bookings give *The Standard* 30% of ad revenue while at *The Nation*, until recently, it had shrunk to 20%.

Even as it diminishes, state adspend still gives the government of the day leverage over the journalism of the recipient media. We saw this during last year's General Election when the Uhuru Kenyatta government frequently tried to strong-arm editors into denying opposition leaders news coverage or to project ruling party messages in favourable ways. Because the government is also a notoriously bad debtor – it owes the Kenyan media industry more than KSh2 billion ($20 million) – *The Nation* and *The Standard* have found themselves pursuing innovative strategies to achieve their revenue targets without state adspend. *The Nation*, which is the financially more dominant of the two, has taken a radical route – two months ago it simply stopped taking government advertising.

The Standard, on the other hand, has chosen a gradual and less confrontational route. It is quietly building alternative sources of revenue to secure its position should the Information Ministry discontinue advertising in private media altogether, which today seems to be a real possibility.

As a way of enriching this discussion, I will share with you some of the measures *The Standard* and *The Nation* have taken.

The Standard has not invented a new business model. It still sells content in print and charges for access to its audiences in newspapers, broadcast and digital. However, faced with government hostility, it has stepped back and re-examined its strategic strengths and weaknesses as a business and challenged many of its established commercial practices in a bold search for entirely new revenue streams to replace government money. Gradually, a strategy – which can be broadly classified into four elements: **diversification, development of new ad revenue streams, donor funding** and **partnerships** – is evolving for the substitution of state adspend.

Diversification: In Kenya, the media industry has been looking at diversification in two ways. One is what I would call **Total Diversification**, in which media houses are trying to venture into businesses which are only remotely related to news publishing but could benefit from our traditional strengths as news publishers. It seeks to answer the question: what other business can we do beyond selling news and charging for access to our audiences? The other form of diversification has prompted the media to analyse its existing advertising businesses with the aim of identifying **unserved** and **underserved** customers in order to develop totally new revenue streams. In business terms, we are being pushed into heightened efficiency and greater innovation.

Total Diversification

Early this year, Nation Media launched an entertainment promotion programme dubbed Lit360. Breaking away from its traditional business, the Group is identifying talented young musicians and marshalling its broadcast and print platforms to launch them onto the entertainment business. The ultimate aim would be to usher the Group into the music promotion business and generate exclusive content for its broadcast and digital platforms.

At *The Standard*, we have been struggling for the past three years with an outdoor marketing business, which was acquired to diversify our revenue streams from news publishing. It draws from our experience in selling advertising space but struggles to make a profit because of the deep corruption in any business which relies on licensing from the Nairobi County Government. It's unable to compete with rivals who have no compunction at all about greasing the palms of city officials.

A more recent venture revolves around farming as an industry and its related services and products. Dubbed Farm Kenya, it's the result of *The Standard*'s realisation that, through its media platforms, it can occupy a central place among farmers and the various companies which thrive on supplying farm products. Besides launching the country's first TV channel dedicated to farming, we plan to leverage our print and digital outlets as a conduit for information to farmers and the preferred marketing partner for makers of agricultural products.

New Advertising Revenue Streams

1. **SME recruitment:** *The Standard* has mounted an innovative campaign to recruit small and medium-sized enterprises into multimedia advertising. These businesses, many of them informal and occupying low tax brackets, seldom advertise beyond placing classified ads yet they are in need of marketing exposure. Traditional advertising, built on expensive rate cards and agency-generated advertisement copy, has never had room for them yet they make up more than 90% of businesses in Kenya and employ nearly 800,000 people.

   Apart from being educated on the value of advertising, these new advertising converts are given free advert production support if they sign up long contracts rather than single advertisement inserts. Secondly, they are accommodated outside prime time or national pages.

2. **Partnerships:** Just as the digital revolution has forced media worldwide to abandon the church-state divide between editorial and commercial, *The Standard* is employing all weapons at its disposal to deepen relations with advertisers. Its corporate affairs manager is building **partnerships** with what used to be traditional advertising customers and offering them a richer value proposition for media exposure than what they would get solely from print or broadcast. The strategy offers customers benefits in the group's bundle of media platforms in exchange for enjoying preference in advertising allocation – elsewhere, it is dubbed CRM or

customer relations management as a revenue development strategy.

3. **New products and niche audiences:** Working with the marketing department, the editorial teams have been challenged to develop products targeting new reading communities that have traditionally been ignored by editors. New sections have been developed on **farming**, for instance, as potential readership groups are identified by analysing the demographic and settlement patterns in expanding urban areas. A second magazine, *Hustle*, has recently been launched for the SME business community. Both these products seek to be relevant to their readers as problem-solving companions in their daily business, rather than ordinary suppliers of information.

4. **Donor funding:** A key responsibility of a corporate affairs manager today is to cultivate relations with development and civil society organisations with the aim of securing sponsorships for content aligned to the agenda of those organisations. These efforts have seen the launch of an editorial-driven monthly pullout on technical and vocational training, which absorbs the highest number of school leavers after high school. Our rivals, Nation Media, last year secured sponsorship from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to produce a weekly magazine on community health. In these donor-funded arrangements, the media controls the content and editorial quality but receives facilitation to focus on a public interest issue aligned with a donor's agenda.

With the business environment changing, media has to be innovative and willing to diversify in order to generate new revenue streams. Replacing government adspend demands imagination on the part of media and a willingness to push the boundaries of our business practices.

It's a major test of our ability to maintain the integrity of editorial content while lowering the barrier which has traditionally separated journalism from advertising.

We must be ready to abandon the traditional and venture into the unknown. Doing business as usual cannot save news publishing from the twin pressures of hostile governments and the digital revolution.

Joseph Odindo is Group Editor of the Standard Media in Kenya.

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The challenges of sustainability of Nigeria's media

The challenges of sustainability of Nigeria's media

By Dapo Olorunyomi

Dapo Olorunyomi, Chief Executive Officer and Publisher of Premium Times Services Limited in Nigeria.

The Nigerian newspaper press is virtually under water today. Its business model has totally collapsed. For an institution that helped lead the mental assault for Nigeria's independence, helped build the consensus for national unity after our dreadful civil war, and particularly for its role as the fulcrum against military dictatorship and the restoration of democracy, this is worse than a tragic tribute to one of the noblest institutions of the Nigerian nation-state.

At its origin in 1859, and through its most significant renaissance in the later years of the 1930s as the Lagos Victorian press, our newspaper culture was producing no more than a few hundred copies that achieved impact on account of the depth of penetration, a capacity for intensive debate-trigger, and an impressive pass on rate.

This helped to build a mental horizon for robust nationalism, even as it also served as a medium of literacy for the emergent Lagos middle class. This critical social and cultural service was underwritten by a modest advertising culture.

The peak of its glory and influence was unarguably in the late 1970s when one institution, the *Daily Times*, under the leadership of Babatunde Jose – the copy boy who grew to become our nation's "most outstanding newspaperman of the 20th century" – would circulate hundreds of thousands daily and on very special Sunday editions could do a million copies.

Today – on most accounts – circulation has dropped precipitously by as much as 60% in the last five years. Although digital advertising is growing, the competition has intensified, leading to slowed growth for some of the industry's leaders, and traditional media houses are slowly going out of business, with declines in both advertising and circulation.

In October 2016, two of the country's leading newspapers laid off more than 100 members of journalism staff between them, pointing to rising operating costs in the sector.

Media managers are whispering in very nervous tones that social media has adversely affected circulation and readership in the print market, forcing them to pivot into a fully digital news service to remain in business and cut costs.

Existential crisis

Yet the truth is that advertising revenues have been dwindling as the switch to digital platforms intensifies and, as many editors will confess, advertising itself constrains the integrity of content as most media houses are forced to push the agenda of their biggest commercial and advertising clients.

The future of Nigerian journalism in the 21st century has to be taken into a more sustainable and consistent revenue model for every reason, but not least of which, the fact that the industry today is eerily passing through an existential crisis of insufferable proportions.

The nature of this crisis is, on the one hand, ethical and professional, and on the other, a more sinister end of newspaper's revenue as we have known it today. A lot of attention has been given to restoring the glory of its past as a thriving institution, but until the revenue crisis is addressed in a way to help explain that it can, in turn, help stem the ethical crisis, the matter will only worsen.

For long, media development in Nigeria has always privileged the social model of journalism over the important balance of a revenue model. This social model allowed it to build loyalty in a community desperately, and perpetually in need of answers in the face of failing governance, phenomenal poverty, corruption, vicious politicians and thieving business captains. Journalism here became an avatar and advocate in a cheerless community of pain and abuses. Yet, the irony persists that the social model, noble as it is, still needs an enabler to give it enduring consequence.

Nelson Mandela, the most visionary of us all, sounded the challenge to African journalism years ago to take up the expanded responsibility as community builders, through which we must interpret him wholesomely, as calling for a compelling business model that would match the social model that brought many of us to the platform of journalism.

This is a wake-up call for a robust journalism innovation and development revolution in Africa. The business model founded mostly on advertising and circulation in the newspaper press has atrophied and is badly in need of a frog leap.

The central challenge of the moment is to pose the question of how journalistic content can pay for the journalistic product. This will open a myriad of options, ranging from plural audience-supported revenue models like membership development, as is the case of *Daily Maverick* in South Africa; a donation or supporters' model like the investigative journalism newsroom of the amaBhungane (that publishes in titles such as the *Mail & Guardian*) in South Africa; and a content paywall, a method of restricting access to content via a paid subscription like the *Business Day* in Nigeria is implementing.

My own newspaper group, Premium Times, is completing the process of launching its own membership platform model. The challenge of the paywall, as we understand it in Nigeria today, is that it must be implemented with the right incentives. *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers and the now-defunct *Newswatch* magazine all tried to implement a paywall and were evidently bruised by the experience.

The Punch pulled a hurried retreat and it might be one of the significant factors in the ultimate demise of *Newswatch*. As for *The Guardian*, it was clear that the policy led to a significant decline in patronage. *Business Day* remains the only Nigerian newspaper that has successfully implemented a paywall and stuck to it, telling us that the Nigerian reading patrons are not inherently rejecting paywalls but for them to succeed, they must be administered properly and professionally.

Business Day, for instance, complements its subscription paywall with the philanthropy support model; advertising; events; specialised publications and an investment in migrating its "commercially viable" content into new value prisms like "a full research and data analytics company which aims to publish up to 20 reports including the Nigerian Banking Sector Report, the Fund Managers' Transparency Report, the Future of Work in Nigeria Report, the Nigerian Technology Industry Report, and the Nigerian SME Financing Report, the Top 100 Companies in Nigeria Report, Banks' Corporate Governance Report, Nigerian Vegetable Oil Exports' Report, etc."

The complete bouquet of *Business Day* includes publishing two expert economists, Doyin Salami and Ayo Teriba, as add-ons; a paid subscription that includes content from the London *Financial Times* and *The Economist*, as well as access to its metered wall where readers are able to view five articles each month at no charge; monthly rates range from N835, N1,200 to N1,500.

A new way of seeing

If journalism must survive, the next frontier in Nigeria and in Africa is the management of a new way of seeing and understanding content innovation.

The revenue framework of good journalism must rest on the quality of its content and the stories they tell, and while people have to be conditioned to pay for content, the depth and interpretative layers that come into content development must be exponentially elevated to justify this payment. Premium Times offers a mixed model that accepts philanthropy support, donations, due diligence operations, commercial advertising, events convening, training, book publishing and a unique range of data services and ventures. When its planned membership platform, training academy, and limited paywall (only for its investigative pieces) are completely implemented in the first quarter of 2019, it will – like *Business Day* – represent the leading evidence in content and revenue innovation in the country.

Dapo Olorunyomi is the Chief Executive Officer and Publisher of Premium Times Services Limited in Nigeria.

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How can media survive in a Facebooking economy?

How can media survive in a Facebooking economy?

The case of the New Times Corporation

By Carol Annang

Carol Annang, Managing Director of the New Times Corporation in Ghana.

Ghana has had state-owned media companies since the country, formerly known as the Gold Coast, gained independence from Britain in 1957. These firms comprise a radio and television broadcaster, the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation; a news wire known as the Ghana News Agency; and two newspaper publishing houses – the Graphic Communications Group Limited and New Times Corporation.

In order to prevent government interference in these institutions, the 1992 Constitution provided for the establishment of the National Media Commission whose mandate includes regulation, appointment of directors and the provision of administrative oversight of these institutions.

The origination of New Times Corporation (NTC) was based on political ideology. It started as Guinea Press Limited belonging to the Convention People's Party of Dr Kwame Nkrumah, the country's first post-independence leader, and was later taken over by the government as a one-channel (print) proposition. From the onset, there was a structural misalignment in terms of management.

Over the past 15-20 years, NTC has seen its newspaper production figures drop from over 70,000 daily in the 1980s. The operational, financial and structural challenges of the Corporation stem from its historical positioning as a one-product proposition – print.

NTC's response to changes in the news consumption habits of consumers in a multiple channel, technologically-driven media industry has not been cohesive. This has resulted in the progressively declining fortunes of the corporation characterised by growing debt, shrinking revenues, obsolete technology and an outmoded skills set.

This situation is reflected in the inadequacy of the existing technological infrastructure to facilitate quality and efficiency in the production and dissemination of news and information to consumers. Digitisation and the optimal use of social media as a tool for reaching and engaging the younger and upwardly mobile consumer, and as the driver of revenue remains a critical missing link.

Current internet penetration in Africa is 16%, with 160 million users and more than 51 million Facebook users. This is projected to increase to 50%, with 600 million internet users by 2027. More than half of these users will access the internet via smartphones. This is a clear indication of what the future will be and therefore the kind of transformation required to ensure that our products and services remain relevant to the consumer.

The irrevocable rise of digital content hubs and platform behemoths like Facebook, Twitter, Google, Samsung and Apple has resulted in a seismic reinvention of the concept of “exclusivity”, which broadcasters and publishers had hitherto commandeered to retain fairly captive audiences.

In essence, the digital revolution is rapidly converging all media as we know it, and the means by which content is delivered has changed forever. Today, we are in the “Age of the Customer” who expects that any information they desire must be available via an appropriate device at the moment of their need. This mindset is largely driven by millennials and the iGeneration and is focused on relationship-building as the basis of consumer internet behaviour.

Algorithms are curating the content that is on Facebook news feeds, almost like media companies curate their content libraries or TV channel lineups. This allows them to track user internet behaviour and direct content to users. While they may not currently be creating their own content, Facebook and other social media platforms certainly provide services that threaten mainstream media companies if we fail to adapt.

The new trend is seeing traditional (print, radio and television) and social media working in combination to provide a powerful new communications opportunity, which advertisers are already pointedly influenced by in terms of social peer-driven content and retail brand choices.

Rather than replace the traditional media, digital technology has given print a multiplicity of screens and devices on which to read and/or broadcast content. In the process, it has also given rise to a social media phenomenon that is amplifying both creative and programming messaging. In essence, audiences are no longer trapped in a demographic or geographical bubble.

Consequently, specific to unleashing its potential, NTC will have to innovate through digital content publishing with a specific focus on:

- improving the quality, user experience and reach of its current publications;
- developing seamless consumer relationships across all digital distribution channels; and
- putting mobile and, increasingly video, at the centre of its consumer’s experience. This will require significant investment in hardware, software and in technical skills and an attitudinal change by media workers. Whether the government is ready, willing and able to do so by itself, or with others, or to leave it entirely to private entrepreneurs, the decision will have to be made now.

Carol Annang is Managing Director of the New Times Corporation in Ghana.

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Experiences from Zimbabwe on paywalls

Experiences from Zimbabwe on paywalls

By Nigel Mugamu

Nigel Mugamu, CEO and founder of the 263Chat online publication in Zimbabwe.

Does Africa accept a paywall? The short answer is no.

263Chat is an online publication based in Zimbabwe's capital Harare. We publish the news we produce on our website – www.263chat.com – and leverage social media platforms to distribute and encourage dialogue around the content.

We have grown our community immensely over the last six years using social media and, in recent years, WhatsApp.

I created 263Chat initially as a Twitter account on 29 September 2012 with no revenue generating plans. At the time, I saw a great need for Zimbabweans in the diaspora and Zimbabweans based in Zimbabwe to "talk'' with each other using a social media platform like Twitter.

The simple idea behind this was that once a week the community would suggest a topic. I would then conduct research on the topic and at 6pm Central African Time on Tuesdays, we would chat around this very same topic. The discussions were robust and generated great interest by the comparably small community we were convening in the earlier years.

I had spent 13 years either studying or working in the diaspora prior to my return home in 2010. I was, and still am, aware of some of the critical issues that influence or affect those in diaspora. By the same token, I have lived in Zimbabwe since late 2010 so I also know and experience life in Zimbabwe. In my experience, I have come across those who live either in the diaspora or in Zimbabwe who don't appreciate each other's lived experiences. 263Chat, in my mind, would play a role in helping us all to appreciate "the other side". Over the years, we added other social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. We took advantage of the fact that many Zimbabweans who access the internet do so via WhatsApp and we created WhatsApp groups in October 2014.

These groups are still in existence and have grown in number. The community engages around different themes, either sports, general news, jokes, jobs and opportunities.

By late 2018, 263Chat employed 18 staff and I am no longer involved in editorial matters. There is an editorial team which decides what we publish as an organisation. I now focus my attention on the business side of 263Chat, which brings me to the topic and question: Does Africa accept a paywall? In my view, Zimbabwe is not yet ready for a paywall.

The audience is simply not willing to pay for online content that has been free thus far.

More work needs to be done around integrating the current payment methods (i.e. plastic money platforms with the online publications in Zimbabwe). We are not there yet.

Online publishers need to find other methods of generating revenue such as enhancing and improving adverts that appear on their sites and introducing membership plans and events for their audiences.

Below are the latest statistics which show a steady growth of the 263Chat online platform:

- @263Chat Followers – 351,000 with an average weekly reach of over 10 million;
- #263Chat hashtag – with an average weekly reach of 75 million;
- 263Chat Facebook Fans – 120,000 with an average weekly reach of between 750,000 to 1 million;
- 263Chat Instagram – 17,400 followers;
- 263Chat YouTube – 26,000 subscribers with over 10 million views; and
- 263Chat ePaper – published daily from Monday to Friday and distributed for free to over 28, 500 subscribers via WhatsApp.

Nigel Mugamu is the CEO and founder of the 263Chat online publication in Zimbabwe.

11

Media in the Sahel

Media in the Sahel

A story of covering hidden bodies of soldiers and state censorship

By Alexis Kalambry

Alexis Kalambry, publisher of Les Echos in Mali.

Introduction

I am pleased to talk to you about the media in Mali in general and the media crisis in particular. For the Sahel region, this crisis, started in Mali, which has become its epicentre, deeply and is negatively impacting our society. Mali is in the throes of terror threats, jihadist attacks, irredentist attacks, and the government's efforts to hide the bodies of its dead soldiers and material losses.

How then can the media work and thrive in such a country?

I would like to focus my speech on the Sahel region, from a Malian point of view. The Sahel region is not a united and homogenous entity. It spreads from Algeria to Sudan, and from Mauritania to Somalia, with people from various civilisations and cultures. It is 5,500km long and 500km wide. A world in itself!

Mali compares favourably with any of the countries of the sub-continent. It has a land area covering 1,240,000 square kms; its population is 17 million inhabitants, 85% of whom are Muslims; and 80% of its children are out of formal school.

Mali was plunged into civil crisis in 2012 when its Tuareg populations occupied the entire northern area of the country, which is two-thirds of the country's territory.

Soon, the Tuaregs were evicted by jihadists who took over control of the land. The country owes its salvation to the SERVAL operation, launched by the French army, which stopped the jihadists advance to Bamako, the capital.

Despite this "liberation", Mali, since 2012, is in a non-war, non-peace and half-war, and half-peace situation.

The Media

The history of media in Mali is closely associated with the country's political history. Malian media was born in a context of political conflict. From the outset, journalism in Mali was one of "activist journalism".

I am indeed in a position to say so loudly because the first Director of *Les Echos*, the newspaper I manage, was elected President of the Republic of Mali!

Malian media is caught between two opposing sides and therefore two contradictory positions:

- Jihadists on the one hand, who directly send threatening SMSes to your cell phone as soon as you work on an article they do not like;
- The government, which says that it is forbidden to write articles "of a nature to affect people's morale";
- How can we write a balanced news story when we are first and foremost Malian, who may be opposed to the issues at hand and therefore are rendered unobjective?
- How can we access areas of tension and war, given our limited means?

In Mali, the only law that exists and covers everything, or at least obstructs everything, is that you cannot do anything or say anything likely to "demoralise people". Everything falls within this broad framework.

For everything regarding crisis, safety and jihadist issues, the Malian media are left to quote and completely re-use articles from the foreign media. The benefit of this, at least, is that we are protected from the legal actions of the State, and these foreign reports fill the information gap regarding what is occurring in the crisis areas.

Sale of newspapers

Since the civil strife started, Malian media has effectively been reduced to vagrancy because the State, the largest customer, has reduced its spending. In Mali, no media outlet prints more than 10,000 copies a day. The best sales average stands at 8%. Classifieds and advertising from the State were the largest sources of income, and State structures' subscriptions averaging 90%.

Since the crisis, the State has reduced its spending. A number of private companies and businesses, hotels and everything related to tourism are now closed. It has now become difficult to sell newspapers.

Is the web the solution?

The web, which had a great impact upon us when it first came, is surely becoming a credible solution. *Les Echos*, the newspaper I work for, is sold online through specialised platforms. Since the crisis, internet sales have increased, whereas before that its contribution to our turnover was only between five and 10%, and readership was made up of those who left the country, but wanted to keep abreast of the local news. Internet sales now exceed 25%.

Either way, the situation remains difficult and to this day newspapers are still trying to find, and even invent, a way to survive!

Alexis Kalambry is the publisher of Les Echos in Mali.

Translated by Murielle Jackson

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Niger journalists' work covering terrorism

Niger journalists' work covering terrorism

By Moussa Aksar

Moussa Aksar, investigative journalist and editor in Niger.

Situational analysis

The Diffa Region on the Northern border of Nigeria and in the Lake Chad Basin, ruled by Boko Haram, and some areas of the Tahoua and Tillabéry regions bordering Northern Mali have been under a state of emergency since 2013.

This state of emergency is renewed every three months. Under this state of emergency, military authorities wield state authority in these areas. In other words, military authorities have the capacity to restrict fundamental freedoms, including media freedom, by citing security imperatives.

In order to fight terrorism and organised transnational crime, Niger's criminal legal system was reinforced through the inclusion of these phenomena in the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Rules, and the establishment of specialised divisions for the repression of terror acts within the Niamey High Court and Court of Appeal. Provision is indeed made for harsh prison sentences for any involvement in an act of terror or a justification of terrorism.

Terror laws' impact on media work

1. A journalist can be sued under these counts, in addition to other types of infringements, by referring to the Criminal Code (instead of the law on the rules governing press freedom). In this way, the risk of falling into this trap is high. In Niger, such situations remain unknown, but cannot be excluded. The processing of information on terror acts can be assessed or interpreted differently, in accordance with different jurisdictions.

   In accordance with these legal and regulatory provisions, individuals imprisoned in the theatre of war or intercepted due to suspected or actual connections with terrorists are detained in the country's jails.

2. The freedom of the media is not questioned or restricted due to terrorism, which remains located mainly near the borders with Northern Mali and the extreme North of Nigeria, despite a few incursions into Nigerian territory where there have been reports of killings.

Access to information in the above-mentioned areas is a major concern. The few journalists going into the area need to be authorised and escorted by the armed forces, who make travel arrangements for the scribes for "safety reasons". The consequence of these actions is that journalists cannot visit these areas as they wish.

I personally experienced the conditions in such military operational theatres. One of these experiences was the opening of military operations in the Lake Chad Basin, on the border between Niger and Nigeria. I covered the conflict between the Defence and Safety Forces of Niger and Boko Haram terrorists, where there was a heavy exchange of fire.

The inconvenience caused to journalists by the lack of access to information and sources in areas where there is a state of emergency has fostered fake news via social networks.

As a consequence, the armed forces' communication department struggles to rectify or deal with fake information circulating on social networks.

Moussa Aksar is an investigative journalist and editor in Niger.

Translated by Murielle Jackson

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A story of fundraising in a time of political and media capture

A story of fundraising in a time of political and media capture

By Styli Charalambous

Styli Charalambous, CEO and co-founder of the Daily Maverick in South Africa.

Like much of its editorial, the story of *Daily Maverick*'s journey to sustainability reads like a thriller. Fundraising for an ever-growing newsroom in a time of sustained attack on the media industry in South Africa should not have been successful – and many times it looked almost impossible.

Starting out life as a for-profit venture in 2009, *Daily Maverick's* first business plan was entirely commercially driven, with aspirations that the R1 million in Angel investor funding would see the five-person newsroom through to sustainability within 18 months. And that was a conservative estimate. We wanted to bring brand advertising to the internet, alongside great quality long-form journalism, ready to ride the wave of print-to-digital migration. We were wrong!

Nine years and 108 payrolls later, break-even has still not been reached but the newsroom now boasts 25 permanent staffers, with a further 10 regular and retained freelancers. It is with a fair degree of certainty that I can claim *Daily Maverick* would not be around today if profit was our primary motive. The pursuit of the greater good significantly aided our fundraising efforts over the years. As our initial rounds of funding ran out, we somehow continued to raise funding from initial investors and others on the basis of readership growth, brand growth and the small but growing revenues that we felt would experience a hockey stick uptick once readership hit a critical number. Our editorial focus was initially supposed to be a blend of business, current affairs and lifestyle that would attract high-end audiences and the advertisers that lust after them. This was central to all our investment pitches and business plans.

As we cycled through the list of sympathetic friends, fools and family, extending credit card debt and home loans to the maximum limit concealable from spouses, the focus of *Daily Maverick* editorial began to change, being pulled into the realm of public service journalism.

Then "Marikana" happened. That is when South African police shot dead 34 striking miners in the small town of Marikana in North West on 16 August 2012. This massacre was a seminal moment for the country and for *Daily Maverick* as we were thrust into the role of leading the independent media charge in South Africa. And as the modus operandi of *Daily Maverick* evolved, so too did the fundraising pool – opening up new avenues of funding as the less profit-driven and more public service-focused editorial began to resonate with a nation that was being starved of quality and truthful editorial elsewhere. Our infant years played out in an infamous period of South Africa's political history. An incredibly corrupt and overbearing regime would scare off advertisers while at the same time we had to battle the dominance of Google and the rise of Facebook in the digital space and the efforts of some bigger established media players who did their best to knock us at every turn. At this juncture, it is important to note the difference between "philanthropy" and "impact investing" – the latter which *Daily Maverick* would come to punt in all subsequent fundraising pitches.

Philanthropy is funding of social endeavours (e.g. climate change journalism) and impact investing is the funding of social and environmental issues with the expectation of financial return in addition to societal impact. The difference being the expectation of return and broader scope – an important distinction as was the case with *Daily Maverick*.

The lesson from raising impact investment is that you will always need more money and more time than you expect. I have never seen a bad business plan, nor have I ever compiled one for investors. At the time, we could never have known the dual impact of corruption and Google/Facebook duopoly would have on our ability to operate a digital media business in South Africa. However, our impact investing fundraising efforts over the years were helped by the crazy period in venture capital funding of new media players in the US, where investment was secured on the back of multiples of revenue, let alone multiple of profits. During this time, we also sought out grant funding for special projects and a dedicated investigative unit but struggled in this space, despite successes like Marikana under the belt, with grant funders' slow pace of operating and navigating their agendas. It was only with the #GuptaLeaks hard drive in our hands that we were able to raise a significant amount of donor funding for what would become our dedicated investigative unit, Scorpio.

Today, we consider ourselves a hybrid operation, with a non-profit vehicle to fund our investigative unit and projects that can simply not be funded in any other way besides grant or donor funding. I would add that a commercial imperative has been important to our make-up despite not pursuing profits above all else. Readership growth, and engagement, was key driver of revenue and raising investment. And without those pressures, and interrogation from investors, we could have made some very different decisions along the way.

After nine years, we have probably extinguished the amount of impact investment we can raise in South Africa and have now turned to readers for support via our membership programme, Maverick Insider. In choosing a membership structure instead of a paywall, we have maintained our duty to public service by keeping all content accessible even to those who cannot afford to pay. The feedback we have received has been hugely encouraging and we are now embarking on a wholesale rethink of how we operate as a business and as a newsroom in order to put our members and audience at the forefront of our engagement efforts.

Everything we do must now consider how we can include our members, provide a benefit to our members through the lens of engagement that will breed further loyalty and affinity. And, as we roll this programme out, we will try and execute on the strategy that we need six to seven significant streams of revenue, each contributing between 10 and 20% of total revenue, in order to sustain ourselves. This means we need to have an entrepreneurial mindset in our approach to the business of media, something which was not essential in the last 50 years of the last century in media organisations.

It is said that to be editorially independent we must be financially independent. The period in which we started out in South Africa meant that we relied on others for financial support but kept our editorial standards higher than most. As the new political leadership emerges in South Africa, we hope the brand and country will be in a place where the hard work invested can graduate to a place where principles are finally met with profits.

Styli Charalambous is the CEO and co-founder of the Daily Maverick in South Africa.

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The challenges of managing one's own radio station

The challenges of managing one's own radio station

Practical insights from a Zambian journalist

By Mike Daka

Mike Daka, founder and executive director of Breeze FM radio in Zambia.

Managing your own radio station on a day-to-day basis provides many challenges. First, you tend to have an emotional attachment to the radio station and its output because you are the one that invested effort, time and resources into starting it up.

This emotional attachment tends to lead to your over-reacting to situations that ordinarily require a certain amount of distance and detachment. Second, is the danger of working too closely with your members of staff. Under most conditions it is accepted that familiarity breeds contempt. In an African context and environment, there is a strong likelihood that employees will soon begin to feel as if they are part of your family. On the other hand, your own little foibles are under severe test and scrutiny, and many workers may take advantage of this.

All these circumstances make the process of decision-making and discipline difficult.
My approach to working with staff has always been to try and build a normal relationship and to share with each one of them lessons from my varied experience. As the founder and executive director of Breeze FM Radio Station, which is located in Chipata, the provincial capital of Eastern Zambia, I oversee decisions in the day-to-day running of the radio station.

My management style is rooted not only in the conviction that Breeze FM could contribute to change and growth in the Eastern Province, but also in the culture that focuses on encouraging individual hard work and responsibility.

'Management by walking'

Danish media consultant Peter Erichs, who observed me at work, thought that my management style seemed to be 'rather walking than sitting' and that I seemed to be a demanding manager because I insisted that plans agreed upon must be implemented and that decisions must be carried out in full.

I know for certain that I prefer to personally handle high priority and the highest income impact producing activities while delegating all other activities to others whom I support mainly through on-going interaction. At the centre of this way of doing things is an emphasis on departmental planning, coordination and review which are carried out in daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual meetings.

Many cynics have remarked that meetings are indispensable when you do not want to do anything. A badly run meeting can indeed be a complete waste of time, and a waking nightmare for people forced to sit through it.

On the other hand, a well-run, productive meeting that deals with relevant subjects efficiently can be of immense benefit to a radio station.

The most important and decisive daily staff meeting at Breeze FM is the "Log Review Meeting", which reviews the radio station's broadcasting schedule of programmes, announcements, news bulletins and advertisements. This meeting ensures that all material is broadcast and on schedule.

The most important weekly meeting takes place on Monday morning when all staff meet to review the past week's broadcasting operations and plan for the coming week's activities and broadcasting schedule.

On Fridays, heads of department meet to look back at work carried out and results achieved in all departments during the week. Focusing on results achieved, challenges met and opportunities to come. This meeting also reviews feedback from the community and plans for the activities to be carried out over the weekend.

At department level, the programmes, newsroom, technical, sales and marketing as well as the accounts departments hold daily planning and review meetings, with each department deciding its own agenda. Meanwhile, at the beginning of each month, each quarter and half year period, departmental appraisal meetings are held to review performance. The appraisal meetings give a correct reflection of the station's performance.

Finally, at the end of each year an annual appraisal of the past year's performance is carried out, outstanding workers are recognised and a summary review of the past year's programmes is broadcast to the public. New work plans, targets and budget are also drawn up.

Although it, indeed, appears to be a situation of "meetings, meetings, meetings", we are aware that our radio station cannot operate effectively without planning or reviewing what is being broadcast and how to operate effectively financially.

The meetings have an added benefit of developing management skills at department level and personal skills at individual level and are strongly supported by my coaching, guiding and counseling. This is particularly important for new employees, who I initially meet on a one-on-one basis, and for whom it is important to quickly open their minds to the fact that radio, like most media, has a tendency of creating a persona that has little to do with one's own true characteristics or even potential.

I take it as my responsibility to caution new employees against identifying closely with the persona that listeners create in their minds as they listen to the radio and to instead be clear about who they really are so that they can consciously work towards developing themselves.

I have no doubt in my mind that the totality of all these meetings is what has contributed to the stability of Breeze FM as an independent and effective information and communication institution for the local public in Eastern Zambia.

Public interest versus income targets

At the end of his visit, Peter Erichs commented that conflict of interest could arise in media enterprises like Breeze FM, with its variety of activity areas and each with its guidelines and targets to adhere to.

He particularly felt that the aim of reaching income targets while at the same time adhering to mission statements and editorial policies of putting the interest of the community first could come into conflict with each other.

I have always insisted that the community interest must come first and that our advertisers and all other partners must respect the fact that the public interest must take priority.

I am proud that through its continuous efforts to plan and review its work, Breeze FM has contributed to making the people of Eastern Province among the most well informed villagers in Zambia and Africa.

They receive local, national, African and international news and information on time every day and voice out their issues and concerns every day. This is an amazing achievement for rural Africans.

Mike Daka is the founder and executive director of Breeze FM radio in Zambia.

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